

THE SEEDLING

The Newsletter of Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden Association
BARAGA, Volume 29, Number 2, July 2010

2010 BARAGA Picnic

Roll on summer and roll on the Annual Picnic. This year Saturday, August 14th at 3:30 P.M., is the designated day for BARAGA's picnic, an event that is now a well established tradition. It will be held near the main entrance and parking lot.

Who Is Invited: All members are welcome, so are their children and their guests. You may bring your friends or members of your family. Just remember to bring enough food to feed them. To help with preparation it is helpful to know how many to expect, so please sign up on the sheet at the office.

Make a Contribution: Please bring a contribution to the potluck dinner. It can be an appetizer, salad, casserole, or other main dish, or a dessert. If

uncertain how much, enough for five is plenty. We often get and especially welcome ethnic treats.

What to Bring for Yourself: Remember to bring your beer or wine, whatever you prefer to drink. BARAGA has some picnic tables, but can always use more tables. Extra chairs, either folding or plastic garden chairs, are always needed.

BARAGA's Contribution: BARAGA will provide plates and cutlery (the disposable kind), also coffee, tea and soft drinks.

The Garden Contest: A main feature of picnic is the garden contest. Bring your flowers, vegetables, fruits grown at BARAGA to the competition and display. Valuable prizes will be awarded in several categories. For other entertainment remember to bring your garden games, bocce ball is popular. If you play an instrument this is a

good chance to strut your talent after the dinner and contest.



A Gentle Reminder

by Don Hatch

Most members do not want to receive a letter from the Inspection Team for not keeping up their plots and pathways. In order for you to stay off the monthly mailing please attend to the following:

- North and West pathways must be kept weed free right up to your neighbors border.
- Keep raspberries tied back so they do not overhang the pathway. No one likes to get scratched walking by your plot.
- If you have any plants that overhang a pathway move them so they do not.
- Do not keep your hose on the pathway, keep inside your plot borders, it is a tripping hazard.
- Watch for any hazard that may cause injury to anyone walking by and remove it.
- Your outside pathways must be kept clear at all times. Do not throw your weeds on the path.
- Keep the weeds on your plot down to a minimum.

Your plot rental agreement allows you to garden on your plot and you must maintain pathways. Plots are nominally 20' x 50' and you are not allowed to increase the size of your plot by moving the borders of your plot. It is not permissible to place anything outside your plot borders at any time especially on pathways. This includes hose stands, planter pots, benches, stools, garden tools, or trestles that constitute an obstruction or possible hazard to free passage throughout the garden.

BARAGA Water Use

by Patricia Kavanagh

Did you know the 2010 budget is \$10,000 per year for water or 1/3 of total BARAGA budget? Water use in 2009 increased by 30% over 2008. Also, the water rate BARAGA is charged by City of Burnaby increased by about 15% in 2009.

BARAGA used much more water than needed by a vegetable garden. (Very) roughly speaking, a vegetable garden needs *about* 0.1 m depth of water per month for healthy growth. Plants get most of their water from rainfall here on the coast, and only need extra watering in the driest summer months. Only about 6 cubic meters (6000 litres) of watering was actually needed over the whole year, but BARAGAITES used about 4.5 times this! Quite a waste. Of course, we do need to water a bit to cover dry periods and to help along spring seed germination, but nowhere near as much water as BARAGA gardeners used in 2009!

Some Water Conservation Tips

BARAGA Plumbing: If someone leaves a tap running at, say, 10 litres per minute (almost full on), about 15 cubic meters per day will drain away (almost triple your plot's watering needs for the whole season!). A dripping tap at say 1/4 litre per minute will add up to about 75 cubic meters over a 7 month period (equivalent to water needs of about 12 BARAGA plots for the whole season!). Since we have so many taps, it is very possible there are several leaks at any time, SO please keep a lookout for those leaking taps so we can fix them quickly!.

Turn off any UNATTENDED tap or sprinkler (including your neighbours!!) You MUST be

present at your plot while you have the water on.
PLEASE REPORT LEAKS IMMEDIATELY!!
BARAGA phone#: 604-842-8571 (leave a
message), email: support@baraga.ca

Water-wise gardening: Keep your vegetable beds **low** (rather than **raised** too high) so that water stored in the peat soil can be accessed by plants all summer long. Mulch your plants to slow water evaporation from soil.

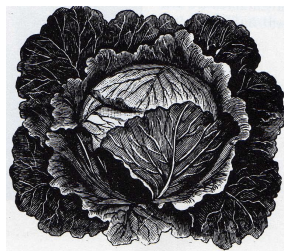
How to water: Better to water *in* the soil rather than sprinkle plants on top (to reduce water evaporation). Water thoroughly to wet soil around plants. Remember too much water can be as damaging to plants as too little water! Use a soil water sensor to test when your plants need to be watered (removes guesswork). Water needs vary with plant type. Many plants (e.g. tomatoes, potatoes, squash) do not like a lot of water, especially on leaves (mildew, blight, and poor growth can result). Water early in the morning. Mid-day watering evaporates more, while evening watering encourages slugs and snails. Hand watering ensures water is poured only around roots and controls the amount of water used. Slow drip irrigation is better than a sprinkler for efficiently supplying water to plant roots.

Water storage: Collect water from your greenhouse roof in a RAIN BARREL. Collection area x rainfall depth per period = volume of water stored per period. A big barrel can collect several hundred litres rain water from your greenhouse roof to use for hand watering during drier periods. Please cover or screen all water containers to prevent mosquito breeding.

Diversity of Cabbages

If you were wandering the white cliffs of Dover on the south-east coast of England and happened to look down at the vegetation rather than gazing at the beach below or scanning the horizon for a glimpse of France in the distance you might notice a solitary plant from time to time.

It would be quite large with yellow flowers reaching two to four feet into the air. Its leaves might bring kale to mind. And that is exactly what it is - the wild cabbage that is the parent of many of our garden vegetables. It does not mind the salty atmosphere or the sea and loves the lime (hence alkaline soil). It is a classic biennial, using the first year of growth to store nutrients in its fleshy leaves and its second year of life to flower and set seed.



There is speculation how it got there; it could be a Roman or Saxon introduction, but since it inhabits similar habitat throughout the Mediterranean, it is likely a native plant. It is one of the first, perhaps the very first, plants discovered by humans and cultivated for food. Historical records begin with the Greeks and Romans, but it was likely used much earlier. When Portuguese sailors reached China (around 1500 CE) they introduced the seed and it became Chinese cabbage.

The thick leaves and stems for food storage made wild cabbage a good candidate for culinary use especially when the bitter taste was bred out. The first spin-off was kale.

While kale is very nutritious (high in vitamins A and C), it has never attained wide popularity. Today kale is an excellent winter crop, but often more desired for its colourful leaves and decorative form in a winter border.

Close on the heels of kale came the development of compact, folded-leaved cabbages. Not quite as hardy as kale, cabbages can store a lot of nutrient very efficiently. Over the millenia a vast variety of differing cabbages have developed, some with very special purposes. Take sauerkraut as an instance; this pickled in salt cabbage became an early way to beat scurvy - a serious problem for early mariners.



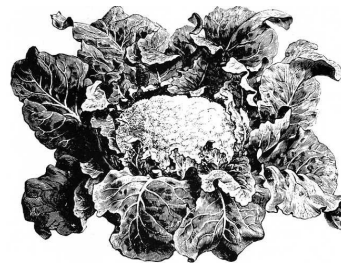
Another early discovery was that the thick stem could be developed into a corm. Hence the appearance of kohlrabi a vegetable known since at least Roman times.

The flowers of some wild cabbage also proved a storage source of nutrients. Types in which this happened were selected and developed into two more ancient vegetables - broccoli and cauliflower. Exactly how these two came to be, whether cauliflower was developed from broccoli, whether the vegetables described more than two thousand years ago were much like the produce we grow or buy today is likely to remain a mystery. Certainly both originated with the wild cabbage and have become part of western culinary culture.

Also shrouded in uncertainty is the brussels sprout; while it is first recorded as from

Belgium in 1750, something like it was described in Roman times. Whether it was little gem-shaped cabbages or brussels sprouts is unclear. It is another way in which Brassica oleracea has found a way of storing extra nutrients and very handy for humans.

So we see how one wild plant still growing wild, has contributed six (seven counting Chinese cabbage) vegetables important to our diet. Although none of them closely resembles the parent there are still similarities. The colours white, red/purple, yellow are to be found in all the siblings in varying degrees.



Hardly surprising, the cultural requirements are similar. Like the wild parent soil of low acidity is best.

Cauliflower in particular grows well where the soil was recently limed. All varieties seem to require plenty of space and no competition from other plants to grow well. Only leafy varieties benefit from a high nitrogen component, others (broccoli, cauliflower) will fail to form if nitrogen is high.

Creating the many varieties has resulted in plants that no longer adhere to the strict biennial habit of the parent. Some varieties have been developed to mature quickly and flourish in summer, others are slower and capable of shrugging off the hardships of winter; the gardener needs to read the cultural advice the seed grower provides. There is quite a variation in hardiness although brassicas are still cool weather plants.

A Potato Story

Well, a Girl Potato and Boy Potato had eyes for each other, finally they got married and had a little sweet potato which they called 'Yam.'

Of course they wanted the best for Yam. When it was time they told her about the facts of life. They warned her about going out and getting half-baked, so she wouldn't accidentally get mashed, and get a bad name for herself like 'Hot Potato' and end up with a bunch of Tater Tots.

Yam said not to worry, no Spud would get her into the sack and make a rotten potato out of her! But on the other hand she wouldn't stay home and become a Couch Potato either. She would get plenty of exercise so as not to be skinny like her Shoestring Cousins.

When she went off to Europe, Mr. & Mrs. Potato told Yam to watch out for the hard boiled guys from Ireland. And the greasy guys from France called the French Fries. And when she went out to Western Canada to watch out for the Indians so she wouldn't get scalloped.

Yam said she would stay on the straight and narrow and wouldn't associate with those high class Yukon Golds, or the ones from the other side of the tracks who advertise their trade on all the trucks that say 'Frito Lay.'

Mr. & Mrs. Potato sent Yam to Idaho P.U. (that's Potato University) so that when she graduated she'd really be in the chips. But in spite of all they did for her one day Yam came home and announced she was going to marry Lloyd Robertson.

Lloyd Robertson! Mr. & Mrs. Potato were very upset. They told Yam she couldn't

possibly marry Lloyd Robertson because he's just . . . (are you ready for this? are you sure? Okay, here it is!) . . . A COMMONTATER
- contributed by Donald Hudson

A Look at Plant Relations and Variety

The statement "No man is an island" is part of the collected wisdom of mankind. In many respects the same can be said for plants. No plant grows alone but is part of a community and may be influenced in several ways by the plants that grow with them.

Competition among plants: Perhaps the most obvious case is overcrowding where seeds are planted too closely together and not thinned. Where plants are not given enough space they must compete for the available nutrients in the soil; they tend to shade each other and grow tall and straggly to get enough sunlight; the growth will be puny and the harvest insignificant. Every plant needs some living room and growing room. Since plants are immobile the gardener must provide the necessary space, along with the nourishment, water, and sunny location required to make good growth.

Gardeners can devise strategies to grow as large a crop as possible in the minimum amount of space. Raised beds about 4-6 feet wide with narrow paths between is one good way to organize garden space. Growing fast developing crops such as radishes or lettuce between slower developing crops of beets, turnips, cabbages, etc. is another way to increase productivity.

Rotation: there are many reasons to change the pattern of your planting and vary your crops. And many ways of doing it. In *The Seedling* (April '08) a sequence of plant rotation, progressing through a sweet limed soil to a more acid one over a three year period, was described.

A few years ago there was another article in *The Seedling* (April '99) describing a rotation of crops; that rotation defined three groups as “brassicas”, “hungry plants” and “root crops” and suggested a three year cycle . Another three year rotation is of plants with shallow roots in the first year, followed in the next by medium depth, and finally deep rooted crops in the third succession. This rotation is believed to use nutrients from a certain depth and leave other levels to recover their fertility. Crop rotation takes advantage of plant properties, such as the nitrogen fixing of peas and beans, to naturally replenish nutrients in the soil and lets soil rest and recover from demanding crops. Which method of rotation to use is best determined by what works for you and which is most practical for your garden. The important thing

is to vary the crops and ensure the soil remains fertile.

Another gardening strategy and incentive to vary planting is intermingling of crops to minimize exposure to insect pests



Marigolds and chives stand guard at the entrance to a plastic tunnel of eggplant and tomatoes.

that might otherwise devastate one kind of crop. Many insects are quite specific in their diet preferences; white butterflies lay their eggs on cabbages so the grubs can grow and feed, becoming white adult cabbage butterflies. A monoculture of cabbages will shout that it is a white butterfly paradise, but if other plants unattractive to the white butterfly's taste are intermingled the butterfly will be confused and may continue the search for a suitable egg-laying spot; the larvae will not establish themselves in any significant numbers. Similarly if different plants are grown each year in a particular location, the population of herbivorous insects will stay low and never reach disastrous proportions.

Some plants, particularly herbs, produce chemical deterrents that keep hungry insects away. Such herbs, garlic, pot marigolds, rosemary for example, can be scattered among or on the border of a vulnerable crop, extending a perimeter of defence.

Another plant chemical defence to consider is allelopathy. Some plants produce chemicals (many different ones) that impede germination or growth of other plants. Probably the best known is black walnut; many plants from tomatoes and peppers to blueberries and rhododendrons will not grow near black walnut (NEVER use black walnut leaves in mulch or compost). Similarly some weeds prosper because they can immobilise or kill off the competition.

An observant gardener will see which plants grow well when planted in close proximity. While allelopathic reactions between plants seems to be a poorly known and documented subject, if a gardener notices plants that do not prosper together there may be good reason to alter the planting pattern.

Conversely there are plants that

prosper in each others company. One well known combination from ancient times in the Americas was to plant beans and corn together. The beans produce nitrogen which feeds the corn and the corn acts as natural stakes for the beans to climb to superior light. Traditionally squash was the third member of this combination. All three were, and still are in many places, a central part of the native people's diet.



Some of the many varieties of squash grown at the garden - Bella Scholz

Companion Planting: Companion planting is a somewhat controversial subject. Some plants such as the legumes are known to benefit the soil. Some plants are known to discourage insects; many herbs and marigolds (*Tagetes* species) are recommended for this purpose. There are plants believed to discourage fungal invaders; members of the onion family, particularly chives, are said to produce sulphur and hence chives are recommended as companions to keep roses black spot free.



Flowers not only make a good looking garden, well chosen varieties often deter or confuse insect pests - Photo by Bella Scholz

While companion planting sounds like a smart and desirable strategy for organic growers, there is a problem. We do not know enough about the subject. Many combinations are recommended, but on what authority? How do we know they will work? There are books on the subject, but there does not appear to be nearly as much science as there is opinion. The answer for now is to go with what works for you. If you discover a beneficial combination give it a try and make a note of the result. That is how experience improves our gardening. Who knows, your practice may eventually lead to serious research and some scientist may write a paper describing why it works. That is how we accumulate knowledge.

Plant a Row/Grow a Row

When harvesting your crops, please give this community enterprise a thought. Most of the fresh food handed out by the Food Bank comes from local gardening . It may be the only quality vegetables some receive.

The pick up is every Sunday morning at 9:30 A.M., so make your contributions early or on Saturday afternoon.

Some Summer Activities

One of the pleasant things gardeners can do while the crops mature and ripen, is sit back and take stock. One good way to do this is to look at what other gardeners are doing. We can benefit from their successes and learn from their mistakes. Or just make it an excuse to take a pleasant stroll around the garden.

Other Gardens: Seems like community gardens are springing up everywhere these days. It is partly the result of GVRD's stated goal of adding food producing space (2010 new opportunities envisioned) and partly the

high demand for organically grown food locally produced.

New Westminster is perhaps typical. New plots were added to the Port Royal site, a Mary Mount Community Garden officially opened and a Simcoe Park garden planned.

But there are community gardens in many lower mainland communities, some long established and well known, others just starting out. Some of them are worth a visit when you are nearby.

Compared with the allotments at BARAGA, you won't fail to notice how small the plots are and how much can be grown nevertheless. Although the annual fees are small these plots can't offer the same value as BARAGA.

There are other gardening destinations particularly interesting to vegetable growers. Eight of them are listed in the West Coast Seed Gardening Guide:

- ☼ UBC Farm
- ☼ City Farmer
- ☼ UBC Botanical Garden
- ☼ London Heritage Farm
- ☼ Richmond Fruit Tree Sharing Project
- ☼ Westham Island Herb Farm
- ☼ VanDusen Botanical Garden
- ☼ A Rocha BC Field Study Centre

If you don't have a West Coast catalog to refer to they all have web sites.

BARAGA Honey will be for sale using a sign-up on the board in the parking lot. First come, first serve with a limit of two jars per gardener. We are still not sure of the quantities. Pick-up of the honey will be on the day of the Picnic.

- Ann Talbot

Info About BARAGA

◆◆◆◆ The BARAGA mailing address is:
Burnaby and Region Allotment Gardens
Association
Box 209, 141- 4200 McKay Avenue,
Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4M9

◆◆ To get Approval for the construction of
greenhouses and sheds (or when making
repairs) phone Don Hatch 604-433-8055 or
Derrill Thompson 604-436-0324

◆◆ Report faulty plumbing and water leaks
ASAP to phone 604-842-8571.

◆◆ Contact phone number for plot rental or
getting on the wait list is 604-842-8571. Please
note that the waiting time for a plot is now at
least two years or longer.

◆◆ To contact the president Don Hatch call
604-433-8055 and please leave a message.
You may also e-mail at - support@baraga.ca

Directors for 2010

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Views expressed in this newsletter are not
necessarily those of BARAGA.